

EXHIBIT

DATE

3/17/2011

SB

144

Ted Washburn

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Cc: <z@wildrockies.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2011 1:51 PM
Subject: Testimony for the record on SB 144

Dear Chairman Ted Washburn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on SB 144. I would also request that my testimony be entered into the hearing record and transcript. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone's wild buffalo herd, protect the natural habitat of wild free-roaming buffalo and native wildlife, and to work with people of all Nations to honor the sacredness of the wild buffalo.

Our members, who come from all walks of life and from places all around the world, envision a life for buffalo in which they thrive within a state of inherent wildness. We also envision a world in which buffalo and all other native wildlife are given precedence on public land, and where buffalo herds remain as a self-regulating sustainable population, and a viable genetic source for the future evolutionary potential of the wildlife species.

I am also a resident of West Yellowstone and live year-round in the Hebgen basin where America's last wild buffalo roam.

Buffalo Field Campaign is adamantly opposed to SB 144, for many reasons.

There is not one example in Montana of a wild buffalo population freely ranging on the landscape. Under SB 144, that circumstance would become law, and every sacrifice made by the buffalo and everyone's efforts to reestablish them as wildlife in Montana would be lost.

Montana needs wild buffalo, in a landscape big enough to support wild, free ranging populations, in an expanse of habitats to fulfill their keystone ecological roles in keeping grasslands and all of the species that rely upon buffalo healthy and abundant (Fallon).

The wild American bison is ecologically extinct (Freese), currently occupying less than 1% of their historic range (Sanderson) that spanned over twenty unique ecosystems on nearly 2 billion acres of habitat.

A decade ago, the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society issued their Position Statement on Wild Bison in Montana. What they said then is even truer today: ***"Current management of private, state and Federal bison herds is leading towards domestication of bison that threatens their wild character and limits important natural selection processes."***

In fact, recent research (Pringle) suggests that buffalo genetic health has been compromised by repeated slaughters over the last 150 years and that only one

3/17/2011

subpopulation or breeding group remaining in Yellowstone retains healthy mitochondrial genetics.

To be given a chance to conserve, protect and restore wild populations of this missing keystone species in Montana is a gift, and an opportunity to correct an historic and on-going wrong that has decimated native buffalo in our state.

SB 144 would permit one of the last buffalo populations in the United States to be relocated only onto the National Bison Range, that is, with buffalo known to have cattle ancestry. Why is this important?

Scientists studying bison genetic health such as Dr. James Derr, Texas A&M, have observed lower weights and changes in metabolism for bison carrying cattle mitochondrial DNA. Cattle alleles displace and compromise the integrity of the bison genome where disease resistance, among other traits, are adapted and passed on in the population. The evidence to date suggests bison with cattle ancestry are susceptible to mitochondrial dysfunction and overall reduced fitness (Douglas).

The descendants of Yellowstone buffalo carry an exceptionally rare and unique genome of the wild species. They represent the one population whose identity as wildlife has not been diminished by cattle genes. They have adapted traits to fend for themselves amidst native predators, and survived and evolved for thousands of years in one of the harshest climates in North America. They retain the migratory instincts that their ancestors have bestowed upon them.

SB 144 would prohibit buffalo that were captured from Yellowstone National Park, placed in quarantine in the Gardiner basin, and repeatedly tested over several years for brucellosis from being relocated in Montana as wild, free ranging wildlife.

Relocating buffalo behind a fence in Montana is not a wildlife population, it's another game farm.

The whole purpose and stated goal of the multimillion dollar U.S. taxpayer funded quarantine study initiated by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks was to relocate buffalo descended from the Yellowstone population to start new Tribal and public herds.

Buffalo Field Campaign supports natural restoration of wild buffalo in Montana through protection of vital wildlife corridors and critical habitats in the Yellowstone ecosystem and encourages committee members to put the state of Montana on course to naturally restore buffalo in Yellowstone by protecting corridors and habitats necessary for wild populations to emerge.

To get there, Montanans will need your help to repeal laws (MCA 81-2-120; 87-1-216) that have skewed the facts, been manipulated by Montana's state veterinarian to fraudulently gain control over Montana's wildlife, and created a costly, taxpayer funded bureaucracy that has clashed with local citizens who support a refuge for wild buffalo in Montana, and not a plan of extinction that is enabled by Montana law.

Since April 2005, over 200 of America's last wild bison have been captured inside and taken from Yellowstone National Park to "determine if bison that have successfully completed quarantine are reliably negative for brucellosis and suitable for the establishment of new tribal and public herds." (Yellowstone National Park)

Over half of these bison, once belonging to present and future generations, have been killed as test subjects in a brucellosis-eradication experiment. By all credible accounts, bison remaining alive and awaiting translocation are free of brucellosis.

While Buffalo Field Campaign opposes quarantine of wild buffalo, the state of Montana has a public trust obligation to restore wild buffalo populations in their native habitats.

The wild American buffalo has been missing from Montana's landscape for well over 100 years. It's time for Montanans to make a generational commitment to conserve, protect and restore wild buffalo in their native habitats for the next 100 years to come.

Thank you for taking action to protect buffalo descended from Yellowstone as a valued wildlife species freely roaming Montana by voting to defeat SB 144.

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References online:

<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/habitat/bisonconservation.html>.

Derr, James. 2009. Bison Conservation Genetics and Disease presentation. Department of Veterinary Pathobiology and the Graduate Faculty of Genetics Texas AgriLIFE Research, Texas A & M University, College of Veterinary Medicine.

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Cc: <z@wildrockies.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2011 1:47 PM
Subject: Testimony for the record on SB 174

Dear Chairman Ted Washburn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on SB 174. I would also request that my testimony be entered into the hearing record and transcript. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone's wild buffalo herd, protect the natural habitat of wild free-roaming buffalo and native wildlife, and to work with people of all Nations to honor the sacredness of wild buffalo.

Our members, who come from all walks of life and from places all around the world, envision a life for buffalo in which they thrive within a state of inherent wildness. We also envision a world in which buffalo and all other native wildlife are given precedence on public land, and where buffalo herds remain as a self-regulating sustainable population, and a viable genetic source for the future evolutionary potential of the wildlife species.

I am also a resident of West Yellowstone and live year-round in the Hebgen basin where America's last wild buffalo roam.

SB 174 would prohibit spending Montana tax dollars "to relocate or transplant wild buffalo or bison" on the Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area, near Avon, west of Helena.

According to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: **"The primary goal of Montana's Wildlife Management Areas is to maintain vital wildlife habitat for the protection of species and the enjoyment of the public."**

To the exclusion and detriment of native wildlife species, all too often cattle are grazed on these habitats purchased by all Montanans for their wildlife habitat values.

The Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area is one of several habitats under consideration by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in a process that has just begun and is not even published yet for public and Tribal review.

Presently, there is no Bison Management Plan in place in Montana. The reason a plan is being developed is because wild buffalo are ecologically extinct throughout Montana.

Wild buffalo inhabiting the state of Montana is a public trust responsibility. The trustees or caretakers have a duty to future generations to ensure that the wildlife trust is protected in perpetuity.

Montana cannot abrogate its' public trust responsibility to the wild American buffalo. If legislators fail to protect wild buffalo, citizens will work to ensure our duty and trust to this valued indigenous wildlife species is met and upheld.

As Montanans we have an obligation to conserve, protect and restore wild American bison and prevent ecological extinction of a valued indigenous wildlife species.

While Buffalo Field Campaign is adamantly opposed to quarantining wild buffalo, SB 174 seeks to preempt a public planning process by setting precedent on excluding buffalo from Wildlife Management Areas in Montana.

Buffalo Field Campaign supports natural restoration of wild buffalo in Montana through protection of vital wildlife corridors and critical habitats in the Yellowstone ecosystem first.

Wildlife corridors in the Madison, Yellowstone and Gallatin river valleys, among them, lead to habitats for wild buffalo including Montana Wildlife Management Areas, public lands on our National Forests and Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management, and Tribal lands.

Buffalo Field Campaign encourages committee members to amend SB 174 to put the state of Montana on course to naturally restore buffalo in Yellowstone by protecting wildlife corridors and critical habitats necessary for wild populations to emerge. Without such an amendment, Buffalo Field Campaign encourages committee members to defeat SB 174.

Please oppose the legislative precedent of specifically excluding wild indigenous species from Wildlife Management Areas in Montana.

The prevalence of fenced, domesticated buffalo as livestock is widespread in North America; only one population of migratory wild buffalo remains in Montana.

Buffalo descended from the Yellowstone population are a gift to Montana, our Nation, and our natural heritage. We have a duty to future generations to commit ourselves to the conservation, preservation and restoration of the wild American buffalo in Montana today.

Wild buffalo have been missing from Montana's landscape for well over 100 years. It's time for Montanans to make a generational commitment to conserve, protect and restore wild buffalo in their native habitats for the next 100 years to come.

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